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AN ACCOUNT
OF THE
WRITINGS OF ROGER WILLIAMS.

"ROGER WILLIAMS," says Professor Gervinus, in his recent Introduction to the History of the Nineteenth Century, "founded, in 1636, a small new society in Rhode Island, upon the principles of entire liberty of conscience, and the uncontrolled power of the majority in secular concerns. The theories of freedom in church and state, taught in the schools of philosophy in Europe, were here brought into practice in the government of a small community. It was prophesied that the democratic attempts to obtain universal suffrage, a general elective franchise, annual parliaments, entire religious freedom, and the Miltonian right of schism, would be of short duration. But these institutions have not only maintained themselves here, but have spread over the whole union. They have superseded the aristocratic commencements of Carolina and of New York, the high-church party in Virginia, the theocracy in Massachusetts, and the monarchy throughout America; they have given laws to one quarter of the globe, and, dreaded for their moral influence, they stand in the background of every democratic struggle in Europe."

The quotation which we have here introduced, taken from the work of a distinguished European scholar and politician, is a just tribute to Roger Williams as the founder of a democratic form of government. That the published writings of one whose principles are thus extending their influence throughout the civilized world, should attract increasing interest and attention, is not surprising. They are varied in their character, and fully illustrate the life and opinions of the author; yet to the general reader they are inaccessible, and, in consequence, are but little known. Indeed, not even their titles are to be found in our ordinary bibliographical manuals and dictionaries. Lowndes and Watts give, in brief, the title merely of his "Key," the latter devoting to it less than two lines. Rich, in his "*Bibliotheca Americana*," gives the title in full, but describes no other work. Ebert and Brunet do not even mention his name. The same is true of Rose, in his "*New General Biographical Dictionary*," while the great "*Biographie Universelle*" gives only a brief notice of his life, barely alluding to but three of his productions. No library in the world contains copies of all his works in their original editions. The library of Brown University, which is the largest and best library in the State, contains only five of his works, and for three of these it is indebted to the recent liberality of Mr. John Carter Brown. In the private library of this gentleman, are to be found likewise copies of the same, and, of several of them, duplicate copies.

On account therefore of the great rarity and value of the published writings of Roger Williams, we have ventured to prepare the following brief description of them, with the hope that measures may ere long be taken to have them republished in four or five handsome octavo volumes. Accompanied by Knowles' excellent Memoir, now entirely out of print, or the more popular and attractive Life by Prof. Gammell, they would constitute a "monument" to his genius and worth more fitting and enduring than "storied urn," or sculptured marble.

I. The earliest published work of Mr. Williams, bears the following title:

"A Key into the Language of America, or an Help to the
"Language of the Natives in that Part of America called New

“England ; together with briefe Observations of the Customes, Manners and Worships, &c. of the aforesaid Natives, in Peace and Warre, in Life and Death. On all which are added spirituall Observations, generall and particular, by the Authour, of chiefe and speciall use (upon all occasions) to all the English inhabiting those Parts ; yet pleasant and profitable to the View of all Men. By Roger Williams of Providence in New England. London, printed by Gregory Dexter. 1643.”

This work was written at sea, on his first voyage to England, in the Summer of 1643, as a help to his own memory, that he might not lightly lose, as he remarks in the preface, what he had so dearly bought “in some few yeares hardship and charges among the barbarians.” It comprises, two hundred and sixteen small duodecimo pages, including preface and table, and is dedicated to his “deare and well-beloved friends and country-men in Old and New England.” It is by far the best known of Mr. Williams’ works, and is still of the highest authority respecting the subject of which it treats. The greater part of it has been republished in the third and fifth volumes of the first series of the Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society. It is also contained entire in the first volume of the Collections of the Rhode Island Historical Society. A copy of the original edition is in the Bodleian Library at Oxford, and in the British Museum ; also in the library of the Massachusetts Historical Society, supposed by Prof. Knowles, when his Memoir was published, to be the only one in the country. Copies are likewise to be found in the libraries of Harvard College, Brown University, and the American Antiquarian Society at Worcester. Mr. Brown has also several copies in excellent preservation.

“This singular, and, as it has been represented, exceedingly copious and versatile language has been made,” says Prof. Gammell, “the subject of much curious inquiry among the philologists of our own and of other lands. The people who spoke it have long since vanished from the hills and forests of New England ; but the language itself has survived them in the pious though humble labors of their benefactors. Specimens of its endless words and its unique structure are still to be found in the “Key,” which Williams wrote, in the “Gram-

“mar” of John Eliot, and especially in the few scattered copies that remain of the Indian Bible, which the noble-minded “apostle toiled away the best years of his life in translating.”

II. The second work which Mr. Williams published is entitled, “Mr. Cotton’s Letter lately printed, examined and answered. By Roger Williams, of Providence, in New England. London. Imprinted in the yeere 1644.” It is a small quarto of forty-seven pages, preceded by an address of two pages “To the Impartiall Reader,” commencing as follows:

“This Letter I acknowledge to have received from Mr. Cotton (whom for his personall excellencies I truly honour and love.) Yet at such a time of my distressed wanderings amongst the Barbarians, that being destitute of food, of cloths, of time I reserved it (though hardly, amidst so many barbarous distractions) and afterward prepared an answer to be returned.”

“In the interim, some friends being much grieved, that one, publicly acknowledged to be godly and dearely beloved, should yet be so exposed to the mercy of an howling wilderness in frost and snow, &c., Mr. Cotton to take off the edge of Censure from himself, profest both in speech and writing, that he was no procurer of my sorrows.”

“Some letters then past between us, in which I proved and exprest, that if I had perished in that sorrowfull Winter’s flight; only the blood of Jesus Christ could have washed him from the guilt of mine.”

“His finall answer was, had you perished, your blood had beene on your owne head; it was your sinne to procure it, and your sorrow to suffer it.”

“Here I confesse I stopt, and ever since suppress mine answer; waiting if it might please the father of mercies, more to mollifie and soften, and render more humane and mercifull, the care and heart of that (otherwise) excellent and worthy man.”

“It cannot now, be justly offensive, that finding this letter publike (by whose procurement I know not) I also present to the same publike view, my formerly intended answer.”

The foregoing extract from the address to the reader conveys a good idea of the nature and character of the work. The opinions of the author are marked by great clearness, and his arguments are presented with the vigor and earnestness which char-

acterize all his productions. The following is the title of the letter to which it is a reply :

“A Letter of Mr. John Cottons, Teacher of the Church in Boston, in New England, to Mr. Williams, a Preacher there ; wherein is shewed, that those ought to be received into the Church who are godly, though they doe not see, nor expressly bewaile all the pollutions in Church-fellowship, Ministry, Worship, Government. Imprimatur, John Bachiler. Printed at London for Benjamin Allen, 1643.” It consists of thirteen small quarto pages. In it, the author vindicates the act of the magistrates in banishing Roger Williams from Massachusetts, though he denies that he himself had any agency in it. Both the Letter of Cotton and Mr. Williams’ Reply are exceedingly rare. Good copies of each are in the Library of Brown University, and in Mr. Brown’s private library. A somewhat mutilated copy of the Reply is also in the Library of Yale College. It is doubtful whether there are other copies to be found in the country, at least in any of our public libraries. Two copies of the Reply are in England ; one in the British Museum, and one in the Bodleian Library, the latter being also mutilated. In 1848 it was republished by the Hanserd Knolly’s Society, in connection with the “Bloudy Tenent.” This volume also, which is a handsome octavo of four hundred and eighty-five pages, is now out of print, and very scarce.

III. His next publication is entitled, “The Bloudy Tenent of Persecution, for Cause of Conscience, discussed, in a Conference betweene Truth and Peace, who, in all tender Affection, present to the High Court of Parliament, (as the Result of their Discourse,) these, (amongst other Passages) of the highest Consideration. . Printed in the year 1644.” It is a small quarto volume, without the name of the writer or the publisher, and comprises two hundred and forty-seven pages of text, besides twenty-four pages of table and introduction. In the Library of Brown University, are two copies of the work, which appear to be different editions although printed during the same year. There is a slight difference in the type and orthography of the title page, and of the headings of some of the chapters. The earlier copy also contains a list of *errata* at the end, which are corrected in the later edition. In all other respects the two copies are precisely alike.

This work owes its origin to a very interesting circumstance. In the first volume of the publications of the Hanserd Knolly's Society, may be found a piece entitled, "An Humble Supplication to the King's Majesty, as it was presented, 1620." "This," says Mr. Underhill, "was a Baptist production." It is a well arranged, clear and concise argument against persecution, and for liberty of conscience. It was written by one imprisoned in Newgate for conscience' sake. So rigid was his confinement that paper, pens, and ink were denied him. He had recourse, therefore, to sheets of paper, sent by a friend in London, as stoppers to the bottle containing his daily allowance of milk. He wrote his thoughts in milk, on the paper thus provided, and returned them to his friend in the same way. It is well known that writing of this kind becomes legible by holding it to the fire.

From this treatise were taken those arguments against persecution, which, being replied to by Mr. Cotton, gave rise to the work of Mr. Williams, and which he has so significantly called, in reference to Cotton's views as opposed to the mild doctrines of toleration, "The Bloudy Tenent of Persecution Discussed." It was written while he was occupied in obtaining the Charter for Rhode Island. In many parts it bears evident tokens of haste, and occasional obscurities show that he had no time to amend his work. Indeed, he tells us that these discussions were prepared in London, "for publike view, in change of roomes "and corners, yea, sometimes in variety of strange houses, "sometimes in the fields, in the midst of travel; where he hath "been forced to gather and scatter his loose thoughts and "papers." It is nevertheless considered to be the best written of all his works. The doctrines of religious freedom are fully set forth, the style is throughout animated, and the page is adorned with frequent images of great beauty. It was republished, as has already been stated, in the year 1848, by the Hanserd Knolly's Society, with an introduction of forty-six pages by Edward Bean Underhill. But few copies of the original edition are known to exist. Two are in England; one in the British Museum, and one in the Bodleian Library. Six copies are in this country; two in the Library of Brown University; two in Mr. Brown's library; one copy in the Library of Harvard College, and one in the library of Colonel Aspinall, of Boston, formerly American Consul at London.

IV. Mr. William's fourth publication was a rejoinder to a work written by Mr. Cotton in reply to the "Bloody Tenent," and published in 1647. The following is the title of Cotton's reply: "The Bloody Tenent, washed, and made white in the 'Bloud of the Lambe; being discussed and discharged of Bloud-Guiltinesse by just Defence. Wherein the great questions of 'this present time are handled, viz. How farre Liberty of Conscience ought to be given to those that truly feare God? And 'how farre restrained to turbulent and pestilent persons, that 'not only raze the Foundation of Godlinesse, but disturb the 'Civill Peace where they live? Also how farre the Magistrate 'may proceed in the Duties of the first Table? And that all 'Magistrates ought to study the Word and Will of God, that 'they may frame their Government according to it. * * * * 'Whereunto is added a Reply to Mr. Williams Answer to 'Mr. Cotton's Letter. By John Cotton, Batchelor in Divinity, and 'Teacher of the Church of Christ at Boston in New England." The work comprises one hundred and forty-four small quarto pages. It was published in London, and printed by Matthew Symmons for Hannah Allen.

The following is the title of Mr. Williams' rejoinder to the foregoing, which is sufficiently descriptive of its contents. "The 'Bloody Tenent yet more Bloody, by Mr. Cotton's Endeavour 'to wash it white in the Blood of the Lambe; of whose precious Blood spilt in the Blood of his Servants, and of the 'Blood of Millions spilt in former and later Wars for Conscience Sake, that most Bloody Tenent of Persecution for Cause 'of Conscience, upon a Second Tryal, is found now more apparently and more notoriously guilty. In this Rejoinder to 'Mr. Cotton are principally,

"1. The Nature of Persecution,	} examined;
"2. The Power of the Civill Sword in Spirituals,	
"3. The Parliaments Permission of Dissenting Consciences	

justified. Also (as a Testimony to 'Mr. Clarks' Narrative) is "added a Letter to Mr. Endicot, Governor of the Massachusetts "in N. E. By R. Williams of Providence in New-England. "London, printed for Giles Calvert, and are to be sold at the "Black-Spread-Eagle, at the West-End of Pauls, 1652." It is a small quarto of three hundred and seventy-three pages, including the introduction and table of contents. This work discus-

ses the same great questions as the preceding, and maintains the same views, with additional arguments. "Both," says Prof. Gammell, "are pervaded with a mildness quite unusual in the controversial writings of that day, and are enriched with an amount of learning that does credit to the varied scholarship of their author." This second work is even more rare than the first. There are two copies in the Library of Brown University,—one of which, the bequest of the Rev. Isaac Backus, is a presentation copy from the author to his friend and fellow-laborer in the service of the Colony, Dr. John Clarke, of Newport. It contains, on the fly-leaf, the following inscription in his own hand-writing. "For his honoured & beloved Mr. John Clarke, an eminent Witnes of Christ Jesus agst y^e bloodie Doctrine of Persecution &c." Mr. Brown has likewise a copy in good preservation. In the Library of Harvard College is a thin book which purports to be a copy of this work, but it contains, says Knowles, only the Preface and Dedicatory Epistles.

V. In the same year in which the last mentioned work was published, Mr. Williams printed a pamphlet, entitled, "The Hireling Ministry None of Christ's, or a Discourse touching the Propagating the Gospel of Christ Jesus. Humbly presented to such pious and honorable Hands, whom the present Debate thereof concerns. By Roger Williams, of Providence, in New-England. London: printed in the Second Month, 1652." It is a small quarto, of thirty-six pages of text and eight pages of introductory matter. Only four copies are known to exist in this country, viz.: two copies in the Library of the American Antiquarian Society, at Worcester, one copy in the Library of Brown University, and one in the possession of Mr. Brown. In the Library founded by the Rev. Dr. Williams, of London, is also a copy.

This pamphlet is extremely valuable, because it contains a clearer exposition of Mr. Williams' views respecting the ministry, than any other of his works. It begins with an "Epistle Dedicatory, to all such honorable and pious hands, whom the present debate touching the propagating of Christ's Gospel concerns; and to all such gentle Bereans, who, with ingenious civility, desire to search, what's presented concerning Jesus Christ be so or not." In it the author says of himself, "I

“have not been altogether a stranger to the learning of the Egyptians, and have trod the hopefulest paths to worldly preferment, which, for Christ’s sake I have forsaken. I know what it is to study, to preach, to be an elder, to be applauded; and yet also what it is to tug at the oar, to dig with the spade and plow, and to labor and to travel day and night amongst English, amongst barbarians! Why should I not be humbly bold to give my witness faithfully, to give my counsel effectually, and to persuade with some truly pious and conscientious spirits, rather to turn to law, to physick, to soldiery, to educating of children, to digging (and yet not cease from prophesying) rather than to live under the slavery, yea under the censure (from Christ Jesus and his saints and others also) of a mercenary and hireling ministry.”

The purpose of the work appears to be, to oppose a legal establishment of religion, and the compulsory support of the clergy. The principal points maintained are: 1. Neither the “begetting ministry” of the Apostles to the nations, nor the “feeding and nourishing ministry” of pastors and teachers, according to the first institutions of the Lord Jesus is now, extant. 2. There ought to be a perfect liberty to all men to maintain such worship and ministry as they please. 3. Ministers ought to be supported by voluntary donations, and not by legal provisions.

VI. At the time when the foregoing pamphlet was published, Mr. Williams also printed the one which is here presented to the public. For the sake of uniformity we repeat the title, in this connection, as follows: “Experiments of Spiritual Life and Health and their Preservatives, in which the weakest Child of God may get Assurance of his Spirituall Life and Blessednesse, and the strongest may finde proportionable Discoveries of his Christian Growth and the Means of it. By Roger Williams of Providence in New England. London: Printed in the second month, 1652.”

It is in the form, as will be seen, of a letter to his wife, Mary, upon her recovery from a dangerous sickness, beginning with, “My dearest love and companion in this vale of tears.” It comprises sixty small quarto pages, including the introductory matter. A very limited edition was probably published at the

time, mostly for distribution among the author's friends. Hence the work has become well nigh extinct. Prof. Knowles, in his *Memoir of Roger Williams*, published in 1834, says of it, "No copy has come to our knowledge." Prof. Gammell, in his *Life*, published in 1845, says the same. Prof. Elton, in his *little Memoir of Williams*, published in 1852, says, "After diligent inquiry, the writer is not aware that more than one copy of this work now exists." Mr. Elton probably refers to the copy in the possession of Colonel Aspinall, formerly American Consul at London. The copy of which this is a reprint, belongs to the Library Company of Philadelphia, being the gift of Zachariah Poulson, Jun. It is bound into a collection of old pamphlets, and being imperfectly catalogued, has until now eluded the search of biographers and antiquaries.

VII. The last of Roger Williams' published writings is the account of the Controversy he had with the Quakers. It was printed at Boston, in 1676, and bears the following title: "George Fox digg'd out of his Burrowes, or an Offer of Disputation on fourteen Proposals, made this last Summer, 1672, (so call'd) unto G. Fox, then present on Rhode Island, in New England, by R. W. As also how (G. Fox slyly departing) the Disputation went on, being managed three days at Newport on Rhode Island, and one day at Providence, between John Stubbs, John Burnett, and William Edmundson, on the one Part, and R. W. on the other. In which many Quotations out of G. Fox and Ed. Burrowe's Book in Folio are alleadged. With an Appendix, of some Scores of G. F., his simple lame answers to his Opposites in that Book quoted and replied to. By R. W., of Providence, in N. E. Boston, printed by John Foster, 1676."

Like most of his other writings it is in small quarto, and comprises three hundred and twenty-seven pages. Its execution is creditable to the American press at that early day. The only copy of it known to exist is the one contained in the Library of Harvard College.

Mr. Williams, in writing this book, used a style of contemptuous bitterness which seems not to have been natural to him. Mr. Fox and Mr. Burnett replied in the same strain, though with more coarseness. Their book is a quarto of four hundred and eighty-nine pages, entitled, "A New England Firebrand Quenched," &c. It would be well, says Prof. Knowles, for the

reputation of all parties, if both of these works could be forgotten. In referring to this controversy, we must avoid confounding the fanatical extravagances of some of the adherents of George Fox, at that period, in New England, which were generally regarded as injurious to the morals and order of society, with the principles of the large and influential denomination of Friends, so called, at the present day.

We have thus given a brief account of all the printed books of Roger Williams which are known to be extant. Several of his treatises, and among them the essay concerning the patent, which excited the displeasure of the magistrates in Massachusetts before his banishment, were not, it is presumed, published. In a letter to Gov. Bradstreet, of Boston, dated May 6, 1682, he speaks of a collection of heads of discourses preached to the "Scattered English at Narragansett" which he had reduced to writing with a view to publication. Search has been made for these discourses, but thus far they have not been brought to light.

The Letters of Mr. Williams were numerous, as he held an extensive correspondence with the leading men of his day. Many of these Letters have been published in Knowles and Elton's *Memoirs*, Staples' *Annals of Providence*, and the *Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society*. Others are scattered about, in the possession of individuals, or in places of public deposit. A large number have recently been found among the family papers of his friend, Governor Winthrop. These will soon be printed under the auspices of the said Society. It is earnestly hoped that the *Life, Works and Correspondence of Roger Williams*, edited by a competent person, may ere long be given to the public, constituting a "Monument" worthy of the genius and character of the Founder of Rhode Island, the Founder of the Baptist denomination in America, and the great advocate of Civil and Religious Freedom.

R. A. GUILD.

Library of Brown University, Dec. 10th, 1862.

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